

201214Z Feb 05

ACTION INR-00

INFO	LOG-00	AF-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	INL-00	DODE-00
PERC-00	EB-00	EUR-00	VC-00	H-00	TEDE-00	IO-00	
L-00	CAC-00	VCE-00	NEA-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-00	
NIMA-00	PA-00	GIWI-00	PRS-00	P-00	CFPP-00	FMPG-00	
SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	R-00	SCRS-00	
PRM-00	DRL-00	G-00	SAS-00	/000W			

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FM AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1003  
INFO AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
DARFUR COLLECTIVE  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
USLO TRIPOLI  
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NDJAMENA 000263

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR, AF, AF/C, AF/SPG, PRM, USAID/OTI;  
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICAWATCHERS; GENEVA FOR CAMPBELL,  
ADDIS/NAIROBI/KAMPALA FOR REFCORDS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/20/2014

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KAWC](#) [CD](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: RUMORS OF REFUGEES RETURNING TO SUDAN

REF: A. STATE 22293

[1B.](#) NDJAMENA 04 2139

Classified By: Political/Economic Officer Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) Summary: Per Ref A, P/E officer met with UNHCR officials, representatives of the National Movement for Reform and Democracy (NMRD), members of the Chad mediation team on Darfur, African Union (AU) officials responsible for Darfur, and members of the African Union Ceasefire Commission to ascertain the veracity of rumors of a planned "safehaven" inside Sudan to facilitate the return Sudanese refugees from Chad. The African Union's Special Representative for Darfur Sam Ibok told P/E officer on February 16 that the rumored safehaven concept may have been presented or suggested to the AU by France. No officials we spoke with believe the creation of a safehaven is imminent or viable. End Summary.

[¶2.](#) (C) Post has previously reported on the safehaven idea in Ref B. It was the "secret" part of an agreement signed between the Government of Sudan and the National Movement for Reform and Development (NMRD). In this "humanitarian" protocol, the NMRD would prepare a suitable climate to encourage the refugees to return back to their villages in the safehaven zone. The NMRD would ensure their security. P/E officer spoke with NMRD leader Norain Minawi on February 16 and Hasan Khamis on February 18. Norain Minawi told P/E officer that discussions with local government officials in early January in Tundunbai and Tine about the creation of a safehaven did not go well. Local Chadian and Sudanese leaders, with the exception of Sultan Hassan Birgo of Tundunbai, doubted the feasibility of the idea and expressed a strong preference for the refugees to remain in Chad, where they are receiving assistance from the donors. (Comment: Hassan Birgo is the point person for the Chadian and Sudanese government officials who support the concept. End Comment.)

[¶3.](#) (C) A second NMRD leader, Hasan Khamis, told P/E officer from Abeche on February 18 that the rank-and-file of the NMRD does not agree with the "safehaven" idea and this is the reason there is a conflict between the GOS and its creation, the NMRD. He claimed that Norain Minawi is on the payroll of the Sudanese Government, which wants to make it look like conditions in Darfur are settling down. He refused to say anything else over the telephone.

[¶4.](#) (C) African Union officials say the idea was recently proposed by France and that the AU has not seriously considered it. On the margins of the Joint Commission on the Darfur Humanitarian Ceasefire on February 17, P/E officer spoke with Ambassador Sam Ibok and the Chairman of the AU's Ceasefire Commission MG Festus Okonkwo. MG Okonkwo said it was foolish to think that the current security situation on the ground would permit the return of refugees from Chad. He told Ibok that any such proposal should be thrown away. P/E officer echoed Okonkwo's views and asked for a copy of the proposal if one actually exists on paper. Ibok said he would try to track it down if it exists.

[¶5.](#) (C) In January, UNHCR's resident representative Anna Liria

Franch and Operations Manager Claire Bougouis reported a few sightings of groups of refugees inside the Sudan border who "spontaneously" returned on their own. Many carried registration cards from Am Nabak refugee camp in Chad. However, the reports of 700 families returning to Sudan may be exaggerated. UNHCR and non-governmental organization officials told P/E officer that these families allegedly received money from an unknown source to cross over the border in late December. We have not received any credible new reports of large numbers of refugees moving back into Sudan. Refugees at Am Nabak refused to be moved to a permanent camp because they fear that if moved, they might be taken back to Sudan. Their fears are the likely result of attempts by some leaders, such as Hassan Birgo, to persuade refugees to go along with the plan.

16. (C) Chadian officials are split over the idea. President Deby has told us that the refugees cannot remain in Chad forever, but he has never raised the idea of creating safehaven zones inside the border with Sudan. The Chadian Government clearly wants a solution to Darfur which would enable the refugees to go back to Sudan. Chadian Government officials are vocal about the pressures the refugees are placing on the scarce land and water resources. However, they also acknowledge privately that many local Chadians are benefiting from services in the camps that are not available

outside. Key Chadian officials, such as the Chairman of the Joint Commission Gen. Mahamat Ali and Special Advisor to the President Ahmat Allam-mi do not think current conditions on the ground would allow a return. However, it is generally understood here that the Minister of Public Security Abderahman and the head of the National Security Agency Chaibo remain the NRMD's key backers within the Chadian government and may still be supporting this idea.

17. (C) Comment: Since the idea of safehavens emerged in December 2004, embassy officers have raised and discouraged the issue with various government officials and parties to the conflict. None of our interlocutors believe that the implementation of a safehaven plan is imminent. We wonder, however, if some of the rumors are the result of circular reporting. We will continue to follow the issue and report as needed.

18. (U) Khartoum and Tripoli Minimize Considered.  
WALL

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